

SPRINGSTIMES

Your Sandy Springs News Source



Greetings!

Sandy Springs residents are paying a penalty of 21 percent on every gallon of water they consume. Yes, Atlanta charges Sandy Springs customers 21 percent more than it charges its own users for the same water. This is a long-standing injustice and one the City of Sandy Springs is firmly addressing at this time.

State law prohibits double taxation. In other words, a resident should not be required to pay two jurisdictions for any given service. But, in effect, our water charges are being used by Atlanta to pay for its sewer improvements. In the meantime, we also pay Fulton County for our sewer service. This is a blatant example of double taxation.

How do we know that Atlanta is using our water revenues to pay for its sewers? We know by checking its bond prospectuses for the bonds to pay their billion dollar sewer improvements. These documents show that water revenue is being used to pay for sewer improvements, thus in effect subjecting us to double taxation.

Some of you may be aware that a lawsuit was filed several years ago in which the plaintiffs were Fulton County, and separately, a group of Sandy Springs residents including myself. This lawsuit was filed to challenge the 21 percent penalty on the water rates. Unfortunately, the group of Sandy Springs residents was eliminated from the suit by the judge as not having standing before the Court (we were not yet a city), and the jury was confronted with a multitude of complicated and contradictory evidence on water rates. The suit was lost by Fulton County.

The water rates are supposed to cover operations and maintenance, and by virtue of paying off bonds for capital improvements, they are also supposed to pay for improvements to the system. We have absolutely no evidence of any capital improvements to our water distribution system in Sandy Springs by Atlanta over the past decade. To the contrary, we experience repeated breaks in the line that produce a ridiculous volume of lost water. Atlanta is slow to respond even to the maintenance of leaks. As to capital improvements in Sandy Springs, their lack of investment is showing up in trunk lines with either too low or too high pressure, both of which are serious problems.

Moreover, the vast majority of the water consumed in Sandy Springs is treated by the new treatment plant jointly owned by Atlanta and Fulton County, located in Johns Creek. This treatment plant is state of the art, and the cost of treatment there is a fraction of the cost of treatment at the old Hemphill Plant that supplies most of Atlanta. Therefore the cost of water in Sandy Springs, if anything, should be lower than Atlanta's, to reflect this differential treatment cost.

We now have a new opportunity to remedy the injustice of the situation. The same State law that prohibits double taxation also provides that when new cities are formed they must

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Anti-Gang Unit Keeps Streets Clean

Two Sandy Springs' specialized police officers are quite modest about their work. They are highly unlikely to tell you they are part of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) Safe Streets Initiative, one of the nation's largest proactive task forces focusing on violent gangs, crimes of violence and the apprehension of violent fugitives. And, it's not because they can't talk about it. They just prefer to quietly go about their business in the City of Sandy Springs Police Department Gang Unit.

"A lot of cities want to deny they have a gang problem," said one. "The City of Sandy Springs Police Department should be applauded for taking a proactive approach. Every city in America has gangs. What we do is to make sure the activity here is not getting worse and keep other gang members from infiltrating the city and conducting their activities here." Sandy Springs' Gang

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New Ambulance Positions in Sandy Springs Provide Optimal Coverage



Five ambulances will be placed throughout the City during peak times.

The City of Sandy Springs has contracted with Rural/Metro Ambulance to provide 911 emergency medical services (EMS or ambulance service) within the City's borders effective July 1, 2008. Under this agreement, Rural/Metro has dedicated five ambulances at peak hours of the day and three at off-peak hours of the day to the City. While these units may be called upon to respond outside of the City's borders should neighboring jurisdictions request assistance responding to disasters or during other unusually busy periods of time, the units will have "home" posting locations within the City.

"This should equate to better ambulance availability and faster and more consistent response times," said City Manager John McDonough. "Sandy Springs has gained two additional units during peak hours and one additional unit during off-peak hours and has considerably more control over the utilization of these units outside of the City limits."

Additionally, the agreement calls for these units to be dynamically positioned throughout the day based upon historical call patterns. This type of deployment plan should assist in reducing ambulance response times, and more specifically, assist Rural/Metro with maintaining their contractually obligated response times of eight minutes to life threatening emergency and 15 minutes to non-emergency requests, 90 percent of the time.

Prior to July 1, Fulton County had contracted with and provided financial subsidization to Rural/Metro to provide these services for all of North Fulton. Under this previous arrangement, EMS resources were shared across all of North Fulton, sometimes leaving Sandy Springs residents and visitors with only three ambulances at peak times of the day. The subsidization provided to Rural/Metro by Sandy Springs through this contract is \$450,000 annually with penalties for failing to achieve response time requirements.

This subsidy paid by Sandy Springs reflects the difference in the cost incurred by Rural/Metro Ambulance to provide the specified number of dedicated units and the revenue that they generate from patient billing. Therefore, Rural/Metro will bill for services rendered, at a rate not to exceed those established by Sandy Springs in the contract.

Mayor's letter, continued from cover

reconvene to negotiate on what is called the Service Delivery Strategy. This strategy is meant to eliminate any instances of double taxation. All the cities of Fulton County will meet in September to negotiate instances that contravene the statute, either among cities, or between cities and the County.

The law provides that if there is no agreement, the issue will go to mediation, and if not resolved thereby, it may go to court. Sandy Springs is ready to pursue all remedies, including the possibility of operating its own water distribution system. No service is more important than the supply of water, as well as the assurance that the supply will be adequate if demand grows. The City is committed to address this challenge.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Eva Galambos".

Mayor Eva Galambos, PhD
City of Sandy Springs



Anti-Gang, continued from cover

Unit began in February of 2008 with both officers. Since then, they have made several arrests. But their work in early 2008 was what gained the attention of the FBI.

"We had solved several cases and made arrests with the Criminal Investigation Unit. They were people the FBI was looking for," he continued. "This opened the door for us to work together. This is a partnership the FBI does all over the country. It's really good for all the agencies, and we work with the US Department of Immigration Services as well." The FBI gets a grant and in turn funds items to local agencies such as unmarked patrol cars, gas, GPS systems, raid vests and cameras. The officers' salaries are paid by the City.

To date, several sweeps have yielded arrests for criminal street gang activity, graffiti and deportation of several illegal aliens operating street-level gangs in Sandy Springs. As residents, if you see youth loitering or spray painting, call 911 immediately. Pay attention to what the young people look like or are wearing to give a complete description to the 911 operator. Graffiti can be prosecuted as felony as well as a misdemeanor. It may also be reported on the City's Web site at www.sandyspringsga.org.

The officers are available to speak at schools, neighborhood associations and clubs. To schedule them, please call the Citizen Response Center at 770-730-5600. If you have information on gangs within the City, please call 770-551-3300.

Constructing Sidewalks to Schools One Worn Path at a Time



The City has budgeted \$1,500,000 in FY '09 to support sidewalk construction.

Worn paths along the roadside near schools in the City of Sandy Springs soon will be a thing of the past, as City staff members work to create plans to install sidewalks within a half mile radius of local public schools. Since the adoption of the sidewalk program, Mayor Eva Galambos and Councilmembers have been working with staff to prioritize where the greatest needs are for installing sidewalks which create safety benefits for the residents of Sandy Springs.

The sidewalk program was initially designed to address requests for sidewalk facilities from residents and neighborhood groups, and it began as a means of prioritizing capital improvement funds for pedestrian facilities. The needs for prioritization have increased greatly since 2006, and the City is currently devoting capital funding to pedestrian facilities while staff is actively pursuing ways to obtain additional state and federal matching fund programs.

In Fiscal Year 2008, the City approved a funding budget of \$250,000 for the construction or design of sidewalks, and the prioritized list included areas around Sandy Springs Middle School, Dunwoody Springs Charter Elementary School and Lake Forest Elementary School. Nearly 8,000 feet of sidewalk has been constructed in the area of Sandy Springs Middle School, while the area near Dunwoody

Springs Charter Elementary School has sidewalk construction on-going. Design is beginning for the Lake Forest Elementary School sidewalk project with construction planned soon.

Proposed for the Fiscal Year 2009 sidewalk program are Woodland Elementary School, North Springs High School, Riverwood High School and Heard's Ferry Elementary School. Additionally, three schools are in the design phase—Spalding Elementary School, High Point Elementary School and Ridgeview Middle School. The City has budgeted \$1,500,000 in FY '09 to support these efforts.



Sidewalk construction near Dunwoody Springs Charter School is ongoing.

Celebrating Our Public Servants



Public safety officials have been constantly on the job since "Day One." Join us in celebrating their efforts on September 30th.

The City of Sandy Springs will be celebrating our Fire and Police Departments second anniversaries on Tuesday, September 30, 2008, from 4:30-6:30 p.m. The event will be held at City Hall's Council Chambers. All residents and friends are welcome to attend and enjoy light refreshments.

"This is another milestone in our wonderful history," said City Manager John McDonough. "We hope all our residents and friends will come out and wish our firefighters and officers well as they continue to provide the best public safety in the state of Georgia."

Also, on hand will be fire trucks, the quick response vehicles (QRVs) and other firefighting equipment as well as police cars, the K-9 unit, HEAT cars, CSI van and other first responder units.



The City of Sandy Springs has recently produced a video on stormwater runoff into the Chattahoochee River. The video outlines how residents and businesses alike can better support aquatic life, alleviate pollution and think about a few simple steps to a better environment. The City is working hard to improve the water quality of our creeks, streams and river. But we need your help. Go to www.sandyspringsga.org and click on "Sandy Springs Stormwater Video" to view the complete video. Remember, the decisions you make effect our community and the water quality all along the Chattahoochee River.

Political Signs Covered Under Sign Ordinance

It's easy to get caught up in the fervor of an election year. But remember, while political signage is not directly addressed in the sign ordinance; all signage is regulated through the following measures:

SIGN LOCATION

- No sign can be placed in the public rights-of-way of the City.
- Signs may not constitute a traffic hazard.
- No sign may be located any closer than 20 feet to an intersection as measured from the intersection of the two rights-of-way.
- Signs will be considered out of the right-of-way if the sign is located:
 1. At least 10 feet from the edge of pavement, or
 2. Behind the utility poles that are along the streets and roads.

"Signs placed in front of the utility poles or attached to any utility pole, as well as signs closer than 10 feet to the edge of pavement will be removed by Sandy Springs Code Enforcement officers or Public Works contractors and discarded," said Marcus Kellum, assistant director of code enforcement.

A Standard Informational sign is a sign with an area of not greater than four square feet, with a sign face made for short term use, containing no reflecting elements, flags or projections and which, when erect, stands at a height not greater than three feet and is mounted on a stake or metal frame with a thickness or diameter not greater than one and one-half inches.

Each lot may display two Standard Informational Signs without a permit, except that during a political election, between the date of qualification and final determination on each ballot issue or candidate, each lot may display an unlimited number of Standard Informational Signs. Political signs should be removed after the election has concluded. For a complete review of the sign ordinance, or to apply for a sign permit, visit the City's Web site at www.sandyspringsga.org.



Political signs fall under the City's sign ordinance. Political signs should be removed after the election has concluded. For a complete review of the sign ordinance, visit the City's Web site.

Contact Us

Sandy Springs Web site: www.sandyspringsga.org

Sandy Springs Citizen Response Center: 770.730.5600